BRILL

The Meaning of "Existence" and the Contingency of Sense

Author(s): Markus Gabriel

Source: *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, March 2014, Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 2014), pp. 109-129

Published by: Brill

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/43281402

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms

*Brill* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*

This content downloaded from 63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Front. Philos. China 2014, 9(1): 109–129
DOI 10.3868/s030-003-014-0007-8

RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Markus Gabriel**

# The Meaning of "Existence" and the Contingency of Sense

**Abstract** In this paper I argue first for a revisionary ontology, that is, for an understanding of "existence" as the property of a field not to be empty. In this context, I distinguish between "metaphysics" (the theory of totality or of fundamental reality) and "ontology" (the systematic investigation into the meaning of "existence"). In the second part, I provide a sketch for a corresponding revisionary theory of the modalities in light of the new ontology proposed.

**Keywords** ontology, world, metaphysics, modalities, contingency, necessity, sense

In Western philosophy, the 20th century was dominated by the view that metaphysics and ontology were hopelessly doomed to failure. Many reasons have been given for different versions of this claim, most of them inspired by broadly Kantian, epistemological considerations. Kant famously claimed, "the proud name of ontology, which presumes to offer synthetic *a priori* cognitions of things in general [...] must give way to the more modest title of a transcendental analytic" (cf. CpR A 247/B 304)[1]. However, in my view his criticism is only directed against a particular form of ontology and not against ontology as such. What he attacks is the idea of ontology as a synthetic *a priori* insight into how things generally are, that is, in all possible ways of accessing them. According to his analysis, the contingent forms of understanding and sensibility always limit the range of our judgments, and this finitude cannot be transcended.[2]

[1] CpR here and in the following quoted refers to *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1998).
[2] For a defense of the fundamental ideas of Post-Kantian ontology see Gabriel (2011).

*Received December 12, 2012*

Markus Gabriel (✉)
International Centre for Philosophy, University of Bonn, D53012 Bonn, Germany
E-mail: gabrielm@uni-bonn.de

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Kantian considerations play an important role in both the analytic (from Carnap to Quine) and the hermeneutical (from Heidegger to Derrida to Gadamer) rejection of metaphysics, although the various anti-metaphysical arguments naturally differ in detail. This also holds for Habermas' declaration of post-metaphysical thinking (Harbermas 1992). Despite the differences in outlook and argument, what is common to all the traditions cited above is the idea that metaphysics and ontology are associated with an idealized trust in the capacity of human reason to penetrate the realm of "things in themselves," "the world as it is in itself," "the absolute," or "reality," as is often said instead. In order to avoid outrageously unmotivated metaphysical claims about the fundamental nature of reality itself, it seems to be prudent to analyze our access conditions to what there is, before we claim to know how what there is really is.

The 21st century has begun with a general metaphysical and ontological, or some prefer to say, speculative turn (Bryant 2011). The call for a renewal of ontology or metaphysics in a more general sense is noticeable across the board of philosophical traditions as early as post-World War Western philosophy. Martin Heidegger, Gilles Deleuze, Stanley Cavell, David Lewis, and the currently booming branch of analytic metaphysics can be counted among those involved in this renewal.

My own contribution to this debate begins with the observation that some crucial and widely-used terms of the debate—such as "the world," "the universe," and "reality"—have not been sufficiently clarified. They are mostly used in an imprecise and suggestive way as terms referring to some ultimate or all-encompassing domain, within which everything is supposed to exist, to be the case, or to take place. In a loose continuation of Wittgenstein's early philosophy, "the world" often denotes something like the "totality of truth-makers" or "the totality of facts." Yet, at the same time, a particular kind of fact, namely facts investigated by the natural sciences, are turned into privileged members of the world, whereas our reference to them, or "mind," tends to be excluded from the domain. Mind is treated as world-less because it comes late in the history of the universe. But "the universe" and "the world" are different objects, as I will argue in this paper.

What is worse, the central concept of ontology, existence or being, continues to be used often without being well defined or characterized at all. In particular, the central conceptual relationship between the all-encompassing domain—"the world," or "reality"—and existence is most often overlooked, although the tradition, in particular Kant, has offered significant contributions towards a clarification of the relation between "existence" and "the world." Many authors implicitly identify metaphysics and ontology and seem to believe that ontology should always be practiced in light of the aim "to uncover the ultimate structure

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

of reality" (Turner 2011, 6).[3]

Against this tradition, I first and foremost distinguish *ontology* from *metaphysics*. In my view, *metaphysics* is the attempt to determine what the world is, where "the world" refers to the all-encompassing domain. This domain has been described with many different words both throughout the history of philosophy and in contemporary natural languages, ranging from "being," "totality," "the One," "the absolute," "reality," or "the universe," to "nature" or "cosmos." In the following, when I use the expression, "the world," I always intend to refer to the all-encompassing domain independently of how one might want to fill in the formal concept of the all-encompassing domain. "The world" is a formal concept in the sense that one can defend the necessity of this concept for our understanding of specific objects or events without thereby specifying a material or substantive concept of the world, for instance, a concept of the world as nature or as the totality of facts.

In the first part of the paper, I will argue that we need to distinguish between the world and existence, even though Kant has interlocked the concepts. Kant argues that "existence" refers to the fact that the "field of possible experience," his concept of the world, is not empty. For Kant, for something to exist is for this something to appear in the world. Thus, in a Kantian context, you cannot do ontology without metaphysics. I disagree with this assumption, but I agree with Kant in that I accept that we need a revisionary concept of existence. I will discuss Frege's alternative ontology, according to which, to exist is to fall under a concept.

In the second part of my paper, I will present some basic ideas of the ontology I have called "the ontology of fields in sense" (Gabriel, in press). In particular, I will sketch a theory of the modalities contingency, necessity, actuality, and possibility, according to the idea that to exist is for something to appear in a field of sense. Roughly, this means that to exist is to belong to a domain.

As I will argue towards the end of the first section of the paper, the world does not exist, which does not mean that nothing exists. The revisionary ontology I defend entails *meta-metaphysical nihilism*: the claim that the world does not exist. This means that metaphysics, the theory of unrestricted totality, does not have an object it studies. Any investigation into the nature of the world as world is doomed to failure from the outset, given that its proposed object of investigation does not itself exist.

This leads me to reject infinite regress as an argumentative ontological strategy in the second section of the paper. If there were an infinite regress in ontology, there would have to be a rule governing the transition from one field of existence

[3] This is also the framework within which Theodore Sider is operating in his *Writing the Book of the World*.

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

to the next. This maximally universal rule, however, can only exist if the world exists given that it pretends to be applicable to *all* domains. But there is no all-encompassing domain, no "domain of all domains" (Heidegger 1985, 23, 115, 119, 121), or "field of all fields" for that matter. The maximally universal rule of the alleged infinite regress that moves from domain $D$ to the domain $D^*$ in which it exists to $D^{**}$ in which $D^*$ exists cannot itself exist. If it existed, it would be all-encompassing, which would be ruled out by the actual infinite regress (if there were one). In addition, no such rule can be specified, as the relation between a domain and what appears within it is not always the same: for the largest prime number to exist between 3 and 77 is different from what it is for Hamlet to exist in *Hamlet*. In a similar vein, for object $O$ to appear in $D$ and for $D^*$ to appear in $D^{**}$ need not be the same, insofar as it need not be captured by a rule applied in both cases. Given that we can know *a priori* that no such rule can be found in principle (as this would amount to the existence of the world), we are justified in specifying the relation of appearing in a field of sense differently according to the field in question. What exactly it is for something to exist in each case, thus, turns out mostly to be an empirical issue, whereas the thin notion of something appearing in a field of sense remains sufficiently *a priori* in order for it to be accessible to ontological thought.

In the context of this paper, it is sufficient to note that the concept of a "field of sense" plays a similar role to the concept of a "domain of objects." Even though I will not go into a detailed defense of the conceptual differences here, it is certainly helpful to clarify that I introduce the concept of a "field of sense" in contradistinction to the idea that everything that exists is either an element of a set or itself a set. "Fields of sense" are distinguished from sets. One main reason for this distinction is that not all "fields of sense" are governed by well-defined extensionality. There are vague and ambiguous fields, such as artworks. There is no straightforward answer to the question how many objects there are in an action painting by Pollock. It is not the case that, in general, two fields are identical if they have the same elements. French citizens, for example, might happen to completely overlap with Spanish citizens, for instance, in the (very unlikely) case that all French citizens become Spanish citizens or the other way around. Still, French citizenship and Spanish citizenship would not be the same. The set of French citizens and the set of Spanish citizens could be the same set (they could have the same extension), but the field of French citizenship and the field of Spanish citizenship could never be the same given that the relevant form of citizenship is defined by and defines different *qualitative* relations between the objects appearing in it. A novel is also a field of sense, just as Italy is. "Venice" belongs both to *Death in Venice* and to Italy. These very different forms of belonging do not both fall under the concept of set-membership. A *sense*, in the ontology of fields of sense, refers to the way objects appear in a field and not to

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

rules for counting them. Consequently, I reject the identification of existence with the existential *quantifier*. The most obvious reason for this, I take it, is that the question:

(1) How many X are there?
is not identical with the question
(2) Does X exist?

To (1) one might respond "3," whereas "3" would be a strange answer to (2). To know that something exists is not at all to know how many *X*s there are or even that there is at least one *X*, given that there might also be half an *X*. I believe that the idea of the existential quantifier is hopelessly infected by the idea of a discrete ontology. A *discrete ontology* rests on the idea that all existing things are discrete units, which, in principle, are countable. However, this only pertains to some domains and I see no good reason to generalize on the discrete ontologies of some fields beyond necessity.

## 1 The Meaning of "Existence"

Kant claimed that existence could not be a "real predicate" (CpR A 599/ B 627) and Frege has joined him with his seemingly similar claim that it could not be a first-order predicate capturing a first-order property of objects (Frege 1980b, §53). I believe that different versions of the following train of thought underlie their rejection of the idea of existence as a real or first-order predicate or property even though it does not necessitate acceptance of either Kant's or Frege's revisionary ontology. Let us call a *proper property* any property reference to which puts one in a position to distinguish some object in the world from some other object or objects in the world. In this context, it is sufficient to elucidate the concept of the world as the concept of the domain in which everything exists. There is no need to commit oneself in advance to the nature of this domain. Many people identify the world with the universe. In my view, however, the term "the universe" refers to a specific domain, namely to the domain investigated by the natural sciences, arguably primarily by physics (depending on your philosophy of science). The identification of the world with the universe usually serves the function of supporting the materialist intuition that nothing exists that is not physical or material in nature. Yet, this is evidently false given that that *there is* a unicorn in the movie *The Last Unicorn*, but that this unicorn *is not material*. An even clearer case is the content of a dream. The content of a dream, for instance, that I buy a unicorn on Mars, is not material or physical. But it is still true that there is a unicorn in my dream. To exist is not to be material (which

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

is, of course, not to say that to exist is to be immaterial). If the world was identical with the universe (the domain of the material), nothing immaterial could exist. Given that all sorts of immaterial objects exist, the world has to be different from the universe.[4]

Now, if existence were a proper property, it would serve a discriminating function by associating a relative complement with an object. A *relative complement* is a finite contrast class. If I assert that I see a blue cube in front of me, the predicate *... is a blue cube* might contrast with, say, red cube, blue triangle, black cube or chemically non-manipulated sugar cube. However, blue cubes usually do not contrast with ugly dolphins or police-uniform-wearing female unicorns. For this reason, predicates are informative. The range of their contrast class or the range of their contrast classes is sufficiently limited so that the attribution of the relevant property to an object contains information.

Yet, this evidently does not hold for the predicate *... exists*, for *all* objects in the world exist. Even if the contrast class of existing things were that of non-existing things, existence would still not be a proper property given that it would still not distinguish some object in the world from some other object or some other objects in the world. "Existence" would still be defined as something like "presence in the world." But once "existence" is defined as something like "presence in the world," one has already carried out a revision of the default conception of existence as a property of objects in the world.

That something exists in the world is equivalent to the world not being empty. This is a property of the world and not of its denizens. The claim that the world is not empty does not provide a predicate that allows the world to be carved up into those things this predicate applies to and those it does not.

Accordingly, we can now classify ontologies in the following way. Ontologies are either *default* or *revisionary*. Default ontologies understand existence as a proper property. This entails that some objects in the world cannot exist, because proper properties do not necessarily apply to all objects in the world. It could be the case that all objects in the world have a certain proper property in common, for example the property of being red. It could just happen that all objects are red. But this would not mean that all objects are necessarily red. They would just all happen to be red, whereas it could not be that some objects in the world exist and

[4] Let it be noted in passing that I reject the idea that the existential quantifier in philosophy should be used as a theoretical term referring to some allegedly fundamental form of existence: the form of existence latching onto the fundamental structure of reality. In my view, the distinction between ordinary usages of existential expressions and philosophical usages is hopelessly infected by metaphysical prejudices. For a clear expression of some of these prejudices see Turner (2011). Ontology is not revisionary metaphysics, it first and foremost describes what existential assertion consists in, without thereby deciding on what existential assertions we would like to turn out to be true.

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

some other objects in the world do not exist. There can be no non-existing objects in the world. It is necessary that all objects in the world exist.

The most widespread version of revisionary ontology understands "existence" as "presence in the physical world," where "presence," "physical," and "world" remain vague concepts of totality. For the sake of the argument let us call this ontology "physicalism."[5] In particular, in the definition of "existence" as "presence in the physical world," to be present is often characterized as "to be physical," which amounts to the circular claim that "to exist" means "to be physical in the physical world." If "presence" were to be understood as a form of binary relation between the world and something that belongs to it, one would already have altered the view. The reason for this is that the physical world is not itself a part of the physical world. Let us say that "the physical world" refers to all of space-time. In this case, the physicalist would claim that to exist is for something to be present in space-time. But space-time is not itself present in space-time. Thus, according to this definition of "existence," space-time itself does not exist, only spatio-temporal objects, and they exist precisely insofar as they belong to space-time. This is clearly an undesirable outcome. Of course, one might say that to exist is to have the property of being spatio-temporal. Under this condition, space-time exists by being spatio-temporal. However, this would contravene the revisionary definition of "existence" as presence in the physical world and would fall back to a default ontology, making existence a proper property. Presence in the physical world is not *itself* present in the physical world. But if it is not, then it cannot exist according to this ontology. Yet, if there is no such thing as presence in the physical world then nothing exists.

Kant and Frege were both more or less aware of arguments to the effect that existence is not a proper property, even though they did not motivate their own revision in exactly the terms just sketched. Nevertheless, they would both have to agree first that revision is inevitable, and second that existence is at least not a proper property. If it is a property, existence must be a property of a different kind.

However, their own answers to the question of what existence is, given that it is not a proper property, both fail for the following reasons, as well as for the arguments associated with these reasons. In short, Kant claims that "existence" is a property of the "field of possible experience" (Kant CpR A 227/B 280)[6]—one of the manifold concepts he uses to elucidate the concept of the world—namely the property that something appears within it, that something is experienceable. To exist, for Kant, is to appear in the field of possible experience.

---

[5] The ontology of physicalism is evidently not identical with all claims labeled "physicalism" or "naturalism."

[6] See also CpR A 248/B 304, A 610/B 638, A 642/B 670, A 697/B 725, A 702/B 730.

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

When Kant officially claims that existence is "position," this in effect amounts to the idea that to exist is to be posited in the "field of possible experience." To exist is to be experienceable, to be part of the domain or field of possible experience, *existere est percipi posse*. Transcendental philosophy is the uncovering of the structures defining, and thereby limiting, this field in such a way that bounds of sense can be imposed on all possible truth-conducive discourse. For Kant, truth-apt thoughts are about things that exist and things that exist are encompassed by the world understood as the horizon of possible experience.

Apart from all the intricate problems tied to transcendental idealism, Kant generates a much more radical problem. The position that there is exactly one world can be called *ontological monism*. I distinguish between *ontic monism*: the claim that there is only one entity; and *ontological monism*: the claim that there is only one domain that encompasses everything that exists.[7] Kant is an ontological, but not an ontic monist. The problem with this is that the world itself does not exist according to Kant. It is not experienceable, it is a regulative idea, a form of concept to which no existing object corresponds. "The world", for Kant, does not refer to anything in the world. But if existence is the fact that something appears in the world, that the world is not empty, then the world has to exist. Something that does not exist can be neither empty nor filled. However, if the world exists, it has to appear within the world, which is impossible given that the world is not an object among others. It is not itself experienceable. Therefore, Kant ultimately is committed to *ontic nihilism*, to the view that nothing exists. If (1) there is a singular domain that is supposed to encompass everything such that everything only exists by being encompassed by that domain, and (2) that very domain does not itself exist, then (C) nothing exists. In that respect, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's observation that transcendental idealism is a form of nihilism turns out to be correct. Although Jacobi was officially concerned with the problem that some form of fatalism might result from Kant's view that the world of appearances is governed by deterministic laws of nature, ultimately the problem

[7] In my terminology, ontic monism corresponds to "existence monism" in Jonathan Schaffer's classification of forms of monism, whereas his "priority monism" would be a form of "ontological monism" (Schaffer 2009, 347–83). However, the category of ontological monism is broader than Schaffer's of priority monism. Kant, for example, is an ontological monist, but he is not a priority monist. He does not believe that the world is a fundamental layer such that every other entity is grounded in it. Also, many of the philosophers Schaffer classifies as existence monists, for example Plotinus or Hegel, are not at all ontic monists. Plotinus, for example, extensively argues that the One does not exist, that it is beyond being, and that it has no content. Hegel, on the other hand, also does not believe that the world is a fundamental structure pre-existing our thought about it. For a reconstruction of the outlines of Plotinus and Hegel in the light of these distinctions see Gabriel (2009a; 2009b).

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

of nihilism cuts deeper.[8]

Even though on some level Frege might be committed to a form of ontological monism too, his advantage over Kant is that he pluralizes the domains of existence. He suggests a semantic understanding of existence as a second-order predicate of concepts, a "character (*Merkmal*)" of concepts rather than a "property (*Eigenschaft*)" of objects.[9] In particular in his "Dialogue with Pünjer About Existence," as well as in *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, he famously claims that existence is the property of concepts to have an extension that is larger than 0.[10] For Frege, to assert that there are horses is to assert that the concept ... *is a horse* is not empty, i.e., that something falls under it. Hence, to exist is to fall under a concept. We can, thus, hold on to the following two definitions of Kantian and Fregean ontology:

> (Kantian Ontology) = To exist is to appear in the world, that is, in the field of possible experience.
> (Fregean Ontology) = To exist is to fall under a concept.

With a few caveats in mind, one could defend Fregean ontology as follows. A long-standing rationalist tradition has thought of concepts in terms of sets of "marks" in order to understand objects in terms of sets of properties.[11] According to this tradition, any object has a finite set of properties by reference to which it is distinguishable from other objects. Horses are animals, they are supposed to have legs, a particular genetic code, etc. The very function of the idea of properties of objects in our epistemic economy is to make objects available to judgments in order for us to be able to refer to a world made up of different objects. Properties that do not serve this function of distinguishing an object within the world from others are, hence, not proper properties.[12] It

---

[8] "Truly, my dear Fichte, it should not grieve me if you, or whoever it might be, want to call chimerism what I oppose to idealism, which I reproach as nihilism" (*Wahrlich, mein lieber Fichte, es soll mich nicht verdrießen, wenn Sie, oder wer es sei, Chimärismus nennen wollen, was ich dem Idealismus, den ich Nihilismus schelte, entgegensetze*) (qtd. in Gillespie 1995, 65. In the original: Jacobi 1980, 3:44).

[9] For this distinction see, for example, Frege (1980a, 64).

[10] Ibid.

[11] The most distinct representative of this tradition is, of course, Leibniz. For example, see Leibniz (1989, 23–28).

[12] In a similar vein, Brandom argues that "object" and "singular term" are sense-dependent concepts in Chapter Four of Brandom's book (Brandom 2000). Brandom's argument there is remarkable for various reasons, but particularly relevant for the argumentation in the text because it emphasizes the necessary connection between our concept of objects and our use of singular terms. Predicative (for Brandom: inferential) structures are constitutive of objects and of the fact that we distinguish them by their properties. Of course, Brandom himself draws different conclusions from this.

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

remains that existence is a property, just not of objects. For this reason, one could agree with Frege *mutatis mutandis* and say that existence is a higher-order predicate. It distinguishes concepts from each other by dividing a logical space of concepts into empty and non-empty ones. Hence, the property of existence fulfills a discriminatory function, but only on the level of concepts, not on that of objects.[13]

Frege ties the notion of existence as a higher-order predicate to his notion of reference. The extension of a concept constitutes the, in principle, countable range of objects falling under it. In this way, his notion of existence squares with his attempt to build mathematics on formal semantics (in the sense of his *Begriffsschrift*), to the extent that number theory can be based on set theory, and set theory is tied to formal semantics. Existence thus turns from mysterious metaphysical Being into the existential quantifier. This idea culminates in Quine's oft-quoted dictum "to be is to be the value of a bound variable."[14]

*Prima facie* there seems to be nothing wrong with this move. However, it ultimately neglects the dimension of sense, which is constitutive for the distinction between sense and reference. As Frege himself points out, we have no way to access reference (and hence to assert existence) without sense. Yet, his disregard of sense in his theory of existence, that is, in his ontology, leads him to identify existence with quantifiability.

Frege explicitly points out that we have no way to access reference (and hence to assert existence) without sense. His famous example of "morning star" and "evening star" as senses of a common reference, namely Venus, thus has an obvious shortcoming. According to Frege, the proper names "evening star" and "morning star" refer to the same thing, i.e., Venus. However, "Venus" is also a proper name and proper names have a sense even if, in philosophy, we sometimes use them to denote the referent of a plurality of senses.

> The sense of a proper name is grasped by everybody who is sufficiently familiar with the language or totality of designations to which it belongs; but this serves to illuminate only a single aspect of the reference, supposing

[13] The question of whether Frege is an ontological monist hinges on the question whether there is a concept of concepts such that all concepts fall under this concept. If there is, then the all-encompassing domain would be this very universal concept. Frege himself avoids addressing this problem with his strict distinction between concepts and objects. On many levels it is a problem for Frege to accept that concepts exist, because this would turn them into objects in his sense. However, this is a problem only for Frege, which need not concern us here. For an elaboration of the problem of the concept of concepts in Frege in this context see my *Die Erkenntnis der Welt. Eine Einführung in die Erkenntnistheorie.*

[14] In the original: "*To be assumed as an entity* is, purely and simply, to be *reckoned as the value of a variable*" (Quine 1980, 13, emphases added).

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

> it to have one. Comprehensive knowledge of the reference would require us to be able to say immediately whether any given sense belongs to it. To such knowledge we never attain. (Frege 1997, 154)[15]

Even though Frege conceives of sense as of an objective dimension, a property of thoughts we grasp rather than produce, his theory of sense is part of a theory of knowledge-acquisition and, thus, falls short of a proper ontology of sense.[16] Hence, it is not surprising that he subtracts sense from existence. Rather than thinking of sense as of itself something that exists in the same right as any other object, he associates sense with a way of conceiving of objects. Frege would hardly agree to understanding senses as "ways things are in themselves," as "properties of the objects presented to observers in exactly the way they are in themselves." To exist is to fall under a concept and he isolates the extension of a concept from its intension in order to tie existence to isolated extension. Yet, the relation of something falling under a concept is only individuated in each case in terms of the sense or senses which constitute the concept, its specific mode of orientation, as it were.

In addition to the semantic and epistemological intricacies of the distinction between sense and reference, Frege is committed to the view that nothing would have existed had there been no concepts. If to exist is to fall under a concept, then, in general, nothing exists unless there are concepts. Of course, Frege could defend a very thorough form of "rampant Platonism," to borrow McDowell's term (McDowell 1994, 88). He could simply claim that there are modally robust concepts; that some concepts are there anyway. The concept of the Big Bang would have existed had no one ever grasped it, and for this reason the Big Bang could have existed without anyone ever noticing. Yet, in this case, Frege would have to elaborate on the concept of existence with respect to concepts, something he tries to resist. He would have to tell us what it means for concepts to exist as modally robust. If concepts are objectively existing modally robust functions, then some concepts would have existed had no one ever grasped them. This, however, entails that concepts exist and *themselves* fall under objectively existing modally robust functions, a view Frege at least does not explicitly consider and seems to be resisting as much as he can.

I take it that Frege's most valuable contribution to ontology is that he introduced a plurality of domains, a plurality of concepts. There is not just one domain of existence, the world, but many domains. So, even if the world does not exist, *prima facie* everything else could still exist. Frege, therefore,

---

[15] See also Frege (1956, 298): "Accordingly, with a proper name, it depends on how whatever it refers to is presented. This can happen in different ways and every such way corresponds with a particular sense of a sentence containing a proper name."

[16] For a defense of this reading see famously Dummett (1981).

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

introduces the option of *ontological pluralism*, which in my view is the claim that there is a plurality of domains.[17] Unfortunately, he over-hastily identifies the domains with concepts, and then neglects the fact that falling under a concept is impossible without the senses of a concept.

The problem is that Frege neither elaborates on his basic ontology nor on the relevance of a principle of individuation for the plurality of domains. For what individuates a domain and turns it into this-rather-than-that-domain is its sense. A concept is this-rather-than-that-concept because of its sense. To fall under a concept is to fall under a particular concept with a particular sense. For this reason, I suggest replacing the idea of a domain-ontology premised on set-theoretic conceptions of existence with an ontology of fields of sense.

In order to briefly specify the relevant notion of sense, let me introduce what I have elsewhere called *the allegory of the cubes*, an allegory inspired by Putnam's argument for conceptual relativity.[18] Imagine that there are three cubes on a table, a blue, a white, and a red cube. If you ask yourself the question: how many objects are there on the table, a spontaneous and true answer states that there are three. In this case, the rule of the count, the sense holding the situation together, might consist in the rule to count the cubes or the colors. If you were to count atoms instead of colors or cubes, the number of objects on the "table" would be much larger than three. You might also just count the three cubes as one artifact, say, as a particular work of art, or as a representation of the French flag. In my view, the rules that determine how many objects there are involve senses, and for each sense there is a field of sense, the objects that appear in its range. The senses themselves are not generally rules, as this would amount to the view that nothing determinate could exist if there were no rules, and it is even stranger to claim that there are objectively existing modally robust rules than to claim that there are such concepts. It is important to think of those rules not generally as something projected onto the cubes or raw subtractive material *à la* thing in itself. The rules are as objective as the cubes, the atoms, and the French flag as long as they correctly represent a sense. Senses are as "real" or as much "out there" as the cubes, which is why the rule to count the corners of the cubes gives us access to the corners of the cubes.

Without going into detail at this juncture, let me just mention a distinction that is crucial for my way of understanding the allegory of the cubes. By "object" I mean "anything that can become the content of a truth-apt thought." By "fact" I mean "something that is true of an object." It is true of the three cubes that they

[17] Contemporary metaphysicians sometimes associate ontological pluralism with the claim that there are modes of being. See McDaniel (2009, 290–319). However, this neglects the possibility of a plurality of domains (not of modes or ways) of existence, which is a different theory from the adverbial theory of modes or ways of being.

[18] See Putnam on the Polish logician (Putnam 2004a, 40ff). See also Putnam (2004b, 240).

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

have colors, that there might be a procedure to break them down into atoms or some other gunk. It is, thus, a fact that the cubes have colors, and this fact can in turn become an object if we think about it. In this case, it is true of the fact that we think about it, which turns the fact into an object of thought and thought into a fact. Incidentally, this facticity of thought alone suffices to integrate thought into what there is.[19] When we make sense of something, the sense we make is often part of what there is. This is why we can make sense of someone making sense. Thoughts are just more facts.

Through the contrasts I have set up in this section, I hope it is sufficiently clear what I mean when I elucidate the meaning of "existence" as appearing in a field of sense. To exist is to appear in a domain constituted by the sense that determines things as being thus-and-so. Things being thus-and-so, that is, facts, are mostly independent of our particular modes of engaging with things being thus-and-so. The fact that I have a nose and two ears is neither created nor altered by my reference to my nose and my two ears as a nose and two ears. My nose and ears appear in a particular field of sense, for example in the field of sense of my body or, currently, in the field of sense of this sentence. We can therefore add another definition:

Ontology of fields of sense = To exist is to appear in a field of sense.

This view differs from Kant in that it allows for an actual (and not just epistemically possible) plurality of fields (and not just for one field of possible experience) and it differs from Frege in its emphasis on the role sense plays in the constitution of existence. In addition, not all fields are concepts, even though some fields are. The field of sense of the Big Bang is not a concept, but a lot of things appear within it.

Before I can sketch my revision of the modalities in light of the arguments so far given, I would like to emphasize my commitment to *meta-metaphysical nihilism*: I believe that the world does not exist. This does not make me an ontological nihilist. *Ontological nihilism* would be the position that there is no field within which anything appears. I clearly reject that. I only claim that there is no all-encompassing field within which everything appears.

To exist is to appear in a field of sense. Appearing is my term for belonging. To belong to a field of sense is neither generally to be a member of a set nor to be an object of a domain we can quantify over. Both set-membership and the existential quantifier are too narrow for ontology. They are provincial forms of sense, at the very best, describing mathematics or some regions of mathematics

[19] Gabriel (2011) have dealt with this idea under the heading of "transcendental ontology." I thoroughly agree with almost everything in Johnston (2007).

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

and some sciences capable of a suitable degree of formalization. I will elaborate on the manifold meaning of appearing and, thus of belonging, in the second part of my paper. For the following argument it is sufficient to conceive of appearing in terms of being encompassed. Existence and, thus appearing, is always local, which is nicely captured by the fact that many expressions in different natural languages use a locative expression for existence such as "there is," "*il y'a*," "*c'è*," "*Dasein*," "存在" and "existence" itself. To "exist" literally means "to stand out." To appear is to be encompassed by a field of sense. Without much ado this entails that there can be no all-encompassing field of sense. If there were an all-encompassing field of sense, it would have to appear in a field of sense. In order for it to appear in a field of sense it has to be within the range of its sense and, thus, to be encompassed by the field it appears in. Therefore, the field within which it appears is more encompassing than the alleged all-encompassing field of sense. If by "the world" we refer to the all-encompassing field of sense, the field of all fields, we have to conclude that the world does not exist. Thus, any position in ontology that entails or presupposes the existence of an all-encompassing field has to be rejected.

## 2 The Contingency of Sense

In his review of my contribution to the book *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter*, Espen Hammer has objected to an earlier version of the ontology of fields of sense, in that it triggers an infinite regress.[20] He goes on to establish a relation between the regress and contingency and argues that I ultimately presuppose the availability of a transcendent, "god's eye point of view" and an "absolute standard" "against which we always fall short" (Hammer 2010). As an alternative, he proposes a Wittgensteinian position, according to which we cannot (and do not have to) transcend forms of life, which generate their own standards in such a way that we cannot judge them to be optional and, hence, contingent.

In order to address the issues raised by Hammer, let me list my definitions of the modalities in advance. *Contingency* is the fact that something could be otherwise. In particular, I believe that it only holds as a relationship between objects in a given field. It could be otherwise in the field of a philosophy lecture than that I raise my left hand (which I always did when reading this paper to actual audiences). *Necessity*, by contrast, is the fact that something could not be otherwise. As necessity, it is field-immanent. It could not be otherwise in basic

[20] "One might think that such a view generates an infinite regress in which the ontological levels will go on forever, and it is not clear (at least not to this reader) whether Gabriel sees Schelling as being committed to some sort of foundationalism or whether his Schelling accepts the potential regress" (Hammer 2010).

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

arithmetic than that 2+2=4. *Actuality* is the same as existence. To be actual is to appear in a field of sense. It is the property of a field not to be empty. *Actuality* is a *field-property*, which is different from a *field-immanent property* such as necessity. *Possibility* is the fact that there is a sense constituting a field independently of the question what exactly, if anything, appears within it. It is possible that Peter is a French Citizen because there is a sense constituting the field of French citizenship in such a way that any person named Peter is eligible as an element appearing in the field.

The question to be answered is whether the ontology of fields of sense triggers an infinite regress of fields such that there only is an object if it exists in a field if this field exists in a field and this field in turn exists in a field, and so on. Hammer thinks that this is the case for my account and that this is the result of my position that every field is contingent insofar as its sense could be otherwise in some other field encompassing the field in question.

Let me begin with the problem of the regress. In a famous passage Richard Dedekind sets out to prove that there are infinite systems. In his *What Are Numbers and What Should They Be?* he writes:

> *Theorem*: There exist infinite systems.
>
> *Proof*: My own realm of thoughts, i.e. the totality **S** of all things, which can be objects of my thought, is infinite. For, if **S** signifies an element of **S**, then is the thought **S'**, that **S** can be an object of my thought, itself an element of **S**. If we regard this as transform **f(s)** of the element **s**, then has the transformation **f** of **S**, thus determined, the property that the transform **S'** is a part of **S**; and **S'** is certainly a proper part of **S**, because there are elements in **S** (e.g. my own ego) which are different from every such thought **s'** and therefore are not contained in **S'**. Finally it is clear that, if **s1** and **s2** are different elements of **S**, their transforms **s1'** and **s2'** are also different, that therefore the transformation **f** is a distinct (similar) transformation. Hence **S** is infinite, which was to be proved. (Dedekind 2003, 64)

The standard reconstruction of the argument contained in this famous passage misses a crucial point that Dedekind adds to the nesting of thoughts he deems an adequate illustration of the infinite. The first part of the argument is familiar to philosophers. If *S* is the totality of thoughts then there is a thought that some thought *s* belongs to the totality of thought. This thought which states that *s* belongs to *S*, can be called *s**. Now this triggers an infinite regress, as, for any thought $s^{*, \cdots, *^{n+1}}$ there is a thought about this thought putting it in the range of the totality of thoughts. At this point Dedekind adds—and this addition usually goes unnoticed—that the set of all thoughts stating that thoughts *s*, *t*, *u*, *v* etc.

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

belong to $S$, i.e. the set $S^*$, is a proper subset of $S$. And his argument consists in the observation that the "I think," the ego accompanying all thoughts $S^*$, is not identical with any thought $s^*$, $t^*$ and so on. The act of thinking putting any thought into the totality of thoughts considered as thoughts (that is into $S^*$) is not identical with any particular thought considered as thought. Hence, $S^*$ is a proper subset of $S$ precisely because it is not identical with the "I think" or, as Dedekind puts it, with "my own ego."

The thinker is not identical with any of its thoughts about her thoughts. It would go too far in a different direction to make explicit how Dedekind's argument is a mathematical exploration of the *Transcendental Deduction's* distinction between the analytic and synthetic unity of consciousness (Gabriel 2012). Suffice it to say, Dedekind needs to draw a categorical distinction between *thoughts* and the *thinking of thoughts* such that no thought ever exhausts the thinking of thoughts, what he calls "my own ego." Thinking and being thought of are categorically distinct. Even if we were to follow the rule "think THAT," where THAT would have to be replaced by some given thought, no thought generated by this rule would ever be identical with the thinking of thoughts in general, which for Dedekind himself suffices to prove that there is an infinity (namely the infinitely many thoughts that each think THAT) that is a proper subset of a larger set.

Hence, it is not quite correct to read Dedekind here as embarking on an infinite regress of meta-thoughts.[21] The argument does not say that for any thought there is the meta-thought that I think this thought and then the meta-meta-thought that I think that I think this thought and so forth. Dedekind avoids this because it would contradict his claim that he can prove that there are infinite systems in the plural.

Independent of Dedekind's argument, I think there is yet another way of avoiding an infinite regress of meta-thoughts. To see where I am heading, let me pin down the fairly obscure notion of an infinite regress. An *infinite regress* is the never-ending reapplication of a rule triggered by its forced activation for a particular mode of information processing. An infinite regress comes with an algorithm that determines a mode of information processing as being this rather than that. For example, "add 1 to any natural number bigger than 0" triggers an infinite regress. Following the rule at all, that is, the rule's very activation, forces one to its never-ending reapplication. Going meta, for example, in the order of thoughts could thus only amount to an infinite regress if we could specify a rule for going meta. However, there is no such rule! The three thoughts:

T1: It is raining.

[21] The following is a response to Shaomeng Li's objection raised in his response during my visit at Beijing Normal University.

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

T2: I think that it is raining.
T3: I think that I think that it is raining.

are too different in order for there to be an algorithm governing the transition from T1 to T3. Grasping the fact that it is raining is only similar to grasping the fact that I think that it is raining in that both are thoughts that grasp facts. Hence, the similarity between the two operations of thought carried out in T1 and T2 does not consist in a nesting of contents within always higher-order levels of thinking. The alleged rule "think THAT" when applied to itself "think THINK THAT" is not univocal, as the meaning of "think" changes.[22] All three thoughts are similar in having propositional content and in that formal respect they are all thoughts that p and, thus, they exist on the same level. To go meta is to do something different from just adding a thought to a thought. It is not at all like addition, where the content of the original position remains preserved. The content itself is changed by the transition into another content. The content:

C1: that it is raining
significantly differs from
C2: that I think that it is raining

because the proposition "that it is raining" in C2 is optional or contingent in the following sense. If I think C1, I am committed to there being rain. If someone grasps C2 and thinks that I think that it is raining, then she is not committed to there being rain. To think that it is raining is to be in a fallible position. It might not be raining. To think that one thinks that it is raining, however, is not falsified by there not being rain but by the fact that one does not think that it is raining. The difference in content is so huge that going meta in the order of thoughts cannot be assimilated into an infinite regress in the technical sense.

At this point, it is easier to grasp the logic behind the following phenomenological example: you and your friends meet in a pub for a few beers. This determines the field of sense as that of going with friends to a pub for a few beers. Some fields are determined by our intentions.[23] In this field of sense, things come in the form of affordances: The beer affords thirst-quenching, the friends afford friendship, gossip etc. Now there are many ways of observing the

[22] This is a response to an objection raised by an anonymous referee for this journal.
[23] Note that it is impossible to determine what it is for a field of sense in general that something appears in it. If there were a general answer to the question: what it is for something to appear in a field of sense in general beyond, the world would exist in the form of the field determined by that answer. It is thus necessary that there be no such answer, as any possible answer to this question hinges on the existence of the world. I elaborate on this under the heading of "positive ontology" in my *Fields of Sense* (in press).

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

manifold contingencies of the scene. You could get into trouble with the waiter because you believe that his particular way of serving you outrageously falls short of any acceptable standards. You might start wondering why anyone would give tips at all or you might discover that it is actually really odd why these people are your friends, given that you have close to nothing in common. You might even get into a thoroughly existentialist mood and wonder why you are this one rather than that one and think that you could radically change your life. Sometimes you maybe even have an attack of metaphysics and wonder why there is something rather than nothing, or, more down to earth, why there is such a strange life-form in the universe as that of human beings who pretend to be rational, sophisticated, almost transcendent creatures while they are really just beer-mongering meat-machines with metaphysical pretensions they only harbor in order to repress their petty fear of death.

All these options present you with the contingency of sense of the very situation. The situation could be otherwise in many senses. It could be an illusion, it could be altered, it could simply be seen "in another light" and so forth. What all these options have in common is that they afford the contingency of the field of sense with which we started.

What determines the range of contingency in a given field is the sense constitutive of the field in question. It is contingent that I now raise my left hand, because the field of sense of writing a philosophy paper does not regulate my raising my left hand. It leaves it open. On the contrary, it is necessary that 2+2=4 in the field of sense of our basic arithmetic. However, 2+2=4 is even false in the field of sense of water drops, as a child discovers in Antonioni's *Deserto Rosso*: If I add 2 drops of water to two drops of water, I will not get 4 drops of water (but one big paper), and it is an important truth about human beings that you do not get half a human being if you cut one in two halves, but that you are left with no human being at all after such a procedure.

As a matter of fact, every field of sense appears within other fields of sense in order for it to exist. Yet, the way in which a sense appears in other fields is not determined by an all-encompassing and regress-triggering rule. The sense of the field of sense in which a given field is nested determines the modality of the very sense determining the modality of the relationships within the original field. Hence, even though 2+2 is necessarily 4, the rules of basic arithmetic might not be necessary, or, at least, not necessary in the same sense. We can always adopt a different arithmetical system.

There is no over-arching rule of nesting one field of sense in another and, therefore, no infinite regress, even though it is true that no field exists that does not appear in another field. But appearance in a field of sense (existence) is an almost empty concept. It acquires a particular meaning in the context of a field. For numbers to exist is for them to fall under the laws discovered by number

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

theories, for unicorns to exist is for them to appear in movies or story-telling, for emperors to exist is for them to become an emperor, etc. The point is that there is no all-encompassing rule because the world does not exist. This, in turn, entails that there is no infinite regress, as an infinite regress in ontology presupposes the availability of such a rule.

Despite his reluctance to call this outcome "ontology," in *Ethics without Ontology*, Putnam comes to the following remarkable conclusion:

> How can the question whether something *exists* be a matter of *convention*? The answer, I suggest, is this: what logicians call "the existential quantifier," the symbol "(∃x)," and its ordinary language counterparts, the expressions "there are," "there exist" and "there exists a," "some," etc., *do not have a single absolutely precise use but a whole family of uses.* (Putnam 2004a, 37)

Yet, existence is not a matter of convention. Putnam restricts the plurality of usages of the predicate of existence incorrectly to the fact that there is no single *use* of ontological expressions. In my view, however, the very multiplicity underlying Putnam's claims is the multiplicity of senses constituting different fields of sense. Yet, the number of those regions is not as limited as classical metaphysics has believed. But where does all of this leave us?

## 3 Conclusion: Metaphysical Anarchy

I would like to conclude with an image, a picture which holds me captive, and I add that philosophy always comes with a picture, a system of images, emotions and experiences we conceptualize in order to turn them into a communal and communicative element. Philosophy, after all, is part of the social practices constitutive of civilization as we know it. It cannot be separated from ordinary language, say, as this is already largely infected by philosophical considerations. There is no, as it were, "innocent" use of totality expressions such as "the universe" and "the world," but rather a vague and widespread use of metaphysical conceptions in ordinary language that got there through the various histories of philosophy in the first place. The picture with which I would like to replace the illusion of an all-encompassing singularity looks like this: We are located in a more than infinite proliferation of fields of sense with no beginning and no end. There is no over-arching structure, no *archê* governing the whole thing. For one thing, there is no whole thing, no world, but only the frayed plurality of manifold appearing. The world does not exist precisely because everything exists. By not taking place it gives place to everything. And it is even better that the world does not exist, because, things being this way, it is always

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

up to us to negotiate our various decisions as to how to compensate the lack of world—as long as the evanescent flickering of semantic fields within nothingness endures. Sense is made even though we will sooner or later cease participating in this proliferation. I sometimes bemoan it and sometimes I do not.

**Acknowledgments** Earlier versions of this paper have been presented at the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy in London, at the University of Memphis, at Temple University, and at Beijing Normal University. I thank all audiences for critical questions to which I have tried to respond in the current version of the paper.

## References

Brandom, Robert. 2000. *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Bryant, Levi., Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman, eds. 2011. *The Speculative Turn: Continental Realism and Materialism*. Sidney: re. press.

Dedekind, Richard. 2003. *Essays on The Theory of Numbers*. New York: Dover Publication.

Dummett, Michael. 1981. *Frege: Philosophy of Language*. London: Duckworth.

Frege, Gottlob. 1956. "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry." *Mind*, New Series 65.259: 289–311.

Frege, Gottlob. 1980. *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logico-Mathematical Enquiry into the Concept of Number*, translated by J. L Austin. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Frege, Gottlob. 1997. "On Sinn and Bedeutung," in *The Frege Reader*, edited by M. Beaney, 151–71. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Gabriel, Markus. 2009a. *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter. Subjectivity in German Idealism*. Co-authored with Slavoj Žižek. New York/London: Continuum Press.

Gabriel, Markus. 2009b. *Skeptizismus und Idealismus in der Antike*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Gabriel, Markus. 2011. *Transcendental Ontology: Essays in German Idealism*. New York/London: Continuum.

Gabriel, Markus. 2012. *Die Erkenntnis der Welt. Eine Einführung in die Erkenntnistheorie*. Freiburg: Alber.

Gabriel, Markus. In press. *Fields of Sense: Anew Realist Ontology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Gillespie, Michael Allen. 1995. *Nihilism before Nietzsche*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1992. *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hammer, Espen. 2010. "Review of Markus Gabriel, Slavoj Žižek, Mythology, Madness, and Laughter: Subjectivity in German Idealism." *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews: An Electronic Journal* (8), http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/24463/?id=21028, accessed on April 12, 2012.

Heidegger, Martin. 1985. *Early Greek Thinking*, translated by D. F. Krell and F. A. Capuzzi. San Francisco: Harper.

Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich. 1980. *Werke*, 6 vols., edited by F. Roth and F. Köppen. Darmstadt:

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
Johnston, Mark. 2007. "Objective Mind and the Objectivity of Our Minds." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXXV/2: 233–68.
Kant, Immanuel. 1998. *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by P. Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 1989. "Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas," in *Philosophical Essays*, translated by R. Ariew and D. Garber, 23–28. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
McDaniel, Kris. 2009. "Ways of Being," in *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, edited by D. Chalmers, D. Manley and R. Wasserman, 290–319. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
McDowell, John Henry. 1994. *Mind and World.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Putnam, Hilary. 2004a. *Ethics without Ontology*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Putnam, Hilary. 2004b. "Sosa on Internal Realism and Conceptual Relativity," in *Ernest Sosa and His Critics*, edited by John Greco, 233–48. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.
Quine, W. V. O. 1980. *From A Logical Point Of View. Nine Logical-Philosophical Essays.* Second Edition, revised. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University. Press.
Schaffer, Jonathan. 2009. "On What Grounds What," in *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, edited by D. Chalmers, D. Manley and R. Wasserman, 347–83. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Sider, Theodore. 2011. *Writing the Book of the World.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Turner, Jason. 2011. "Ontological Nihilism," in *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, Vol. 6, edited by K. Bennett and D. Zimmerman, 2–54. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This content downloaded from
63.233.192.60 on Sun, 15 Jan 2023 23:53:50 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms